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ADDRESS

ON

EDUCATION,

DELIVERED IN THE

COURT HOUSE, AT SUNBURY, Pa.

NOVEMBER 6th, 1854,

BY

JOHN J. REIMENSNYDER,

County Superintendent of Public Schools of Northumberland County, Pa.

BALTIMORE:

T. NEWTON KURTZ,

No. 151 Pratt street.

1854.

SUNBURY, *Nov.* 6th, 1854.

MR. REIMENSNYDER,

DEAR SIR :—We, the undersigned subscribers, having listened with the highest interest to your eloquent Address on Education, delivered in the Court House at Sunbury, this evening, respectfully request the same for publication.

We are happy in doing so, to feel, that we express the unanimous sentiment of your whole auditory.

S. RICHARD PEALE,
CHAS. A. KUTZ,
JOHN ROUSH,
PETER KELCHNER,
JOHN W. PEALE,
J. WOODS BROWN,
JAMES BEARD,
FRANKLIN BOUND,
H. W. HEINEN,

A. JORDAN,
H. J. WOLVERTON,
M. L. SHINDEL,
JAMES POLLOCK,
W. C. LAWSON,
DAVID TEAS,
A. T. BEISEL,
ISAAC HUFF,
G. F. MILLER.

SUNBURY, *Nov.* 6th, 1854.

To S. R. PEALE Esq., and OTHERS,

GENTLEMEN :—The manuscript of my Address on Education, just delivered in the Court House, which you request for publication, shall be furnished. Whatever may have been my previous opinion of the merits of said Address, after reading your names, amongst which are those of our learned and venerable President Judge, and our highly esteemed Governor elect, I feel it my duty to comply with your request.

Yours, Respectfully,

JOHN J. REIMENSNYDER.

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A D D R E S S .

FELLOW CITIZENS :

Though much is done for the cause of education in our day and country, enough is not yet done. There are still many who do not feel interested for its progress as they should. We are often astonished and grieved that there are still parents who feel little concern on this momentous subject. Their children are furnished with wealth, trained to industry and economy, but sent into the world without an education. I wish often, I possessed the power to communicate my views and feelings on the value of a good education, to every father and mother ; every son and daughter ; to every child in our land.

I would ask parents to glance into society, for it requires but a glance, and behold the advantages of education. We care not whether a man is a farmer, mechanic or day laborer, he sustains a great loss if he lacks a good education. Who are our best farmers ? Are they not those who by means of a good education, have been able to apply science to the cultivation of the soil. They have gathered useful knowledge from many sources, and are reaping its golden fruits, in the ample harvests which it has helped them to secure. Who are our best mechanics ? Are they not those, who, together with industry and natural genius, also possess a good education ? To what are we indebted for the many useful inventions, which are an honor to our age and country ? To genius it is true ; but genius developed and matured by a good education. The railroad, the telegraph, the stately building, our towns and villages, our churches and colleges, announce to every reflecting beholder the great value of intelligence, of science and of art.

The man who labors by the day is greatly benefited by a good education. It protects him against the unfair and fraudulent designs of dishonest employers, and in the judgment of all whose good opinion is valuable and desirable, he is elevated on account of his intelligence, which is the fruit of his good education.

But, beyond all that I have mentioned, there is a much greater advantage of education. It is the interior satisfaction which it affords to the possessor. There is an inward pleasure in knowledge which cannot be described. The man who has been properly educated and is virtuous, has a treasure which no temporal misfortune can remove. He may lose health, and wealth, and friends, but the inward pleasures of a good education will never forsake him.

The sky may be dark and thickly overcast with clouds; the storm may rage and rive the stately oak, but beyond those clouds, far from the fearful storm, it is cheerful, peaceful day. So it is with the educated and the virtuous. Clouds of sorrow and sadness may gather over their sky, storms of trouble may rage around them, but there is a sun of light in the soul. *They can read, they can write, they can study*; the troubles and sorrows of misfortune are lost in the mental exercises which a good education enables them to indulge, like the clouds and mists of darkness in the cheerful light of a glorious ascending sun.

The great poet, Milton, amid many trials, amongst which was the loss of sight, no doubt derived great satisfaction from a liberal education.

When blind and in solitude, his imagination was daily at work, and its productions of hidden glory must have afforded him great delight. How could such pictures as are contained in his *Paradise Lost* be present in his mind without affording pleasure to it? Just think of *Paradise* as described by him. "Its trees and fruits—its fields arrayed in verdure and adorned with flowers; the life which breathed in its winds and flowed in its rivers—the serenity of its sky and the splendor of its sunshine; together with the immortality which gilded and burnished all its beautiful scenes!"

In this delightful place, Milton's spirit lived whilst engaged in composing his *Paradise Lost*, and it was his learning, perhaps, as much as his genius, which enabled him, mentally at least, to dwell in Paradise.

I might also refer to Kossuth in prison, with only a few books to entertain him. How sad would have been his condition there, without learning enough to enable him to acquire more. On the other hand what satisfaction must it have afforded him, to study a language and to lay the foundation of a future eloquence, which like the sound of an unearthly trumpet, our own country and other nations, heard entranced.

How unwise; how destructive of the true happiness and lasting benefit of children, is the policy of those parents, who give their children houses and lands, silver and gold, but still leave them miserably poor, because they leave them without an education.

I am well aware that those who have no education cannot appreciate its value and its pleasures. Like a blind man who never knew the pleasures of vision, they know not what the pleasures of education are. But though a blind man cannot appreciate the pleasures of vision, he often feels the disadvantages of the want of sight. He must often put his life and fortune into the hands of others and may lose both through their neglect.

So it is with the uneducated. Intellectually they are blind. They must depend on others to lead and guide them. Often, when in the company of the intelligent and refined, they feel as much perplexed and at a loss how to act, as a blind man without a guide. If such persons are humble, they will be regarded with pity, but if they are conceited and proud, as sometimes is the case, they become objects of scorn and contempt. The day when wealth varnished ignorance and made it pass with honor, has to some extent gone by, and we earnestly hope it may never come again. There are few more pitiable characters than a rich, proud, conceited, ignorant person, who amid the glitter and drapery of silver, and gold, and wealth, has in his soul the darkness and stupidity of the iron age, and finds his greatest pleasure in "buying good bargains" at sales, shaving notes, or

speculations of some sort. Of such an one (and we still have some such) if once he leaves the stage, it may be said in the language of the poet :

“His ashes undistinguished lie,
His place, his power, his memory die.”

The common school system, if universally adopted and faithfully put into operation, will remove the darkness of ignorance, and give to our country the light and blessings of a great and glorious *mental day*. It will afford such an education to our young people as will make them intelligent and wise, and enable them to appear in society with credit to themselves and their friends.

This is an end to be attained which every father and mother should most ardently desire. To them it should not be a matter of indifference, whether their children appear upon the stage of life in an awkward and embarrassed manner, the subjects of scorn and derision, or whether they appear with credit to themselves and their friends. I heard a man of wealth once remark, and his manner told that he was sincere, “I would rather be poor than to lack a good education. I never am in company, but I feel more or less uncomfortable and embarrassed.” He was a man of good character, good strong natural sense, and had he been furnished with a proper education, might have become one of the most useful men. He was frequently solicited to become a candidate for office, which he wisely declined on account of his want of learning. Of such men there are still not a few, they are men of good sense, good character, and might be much more useful than they are, if they had a better education.

It often happens that the children of parents who cannot at their own expense educate them, have excellent natural talents, and when they arrive at years of maturity, are placed in circumstances, where, if possessed of even a good common education, such as can be obtained in our public schools, might do great service to their country and the world, and it is, therefore, due to them that they should possess it. In our happy country, where the road to usefulness and honor is equally open

to all who are qualified to walk in it, all should enjoy the means as far as practicable to be thus qualified. Some of the greatest and best men of our own and other countries, have had in early life the advantages only of a common education. President Andrew Jackson, who was, whilst living, one of America's brightest stars, and whose deeds and history still adorn our sky with light and splendor, received, when young, but a limited education. With this to instruct, to guide and to animate him, he sought and acquired more, until he was prepared for the highest responsibilities and the highest offices in the gift of the American people. He ascended height after height of usefulness and honor, until laden with good old age, he sank into the tomb covered with glory, and lamented, without distinction of party, by a nation's tears.

Henry Clay, whose eloquence and intellectual powers are universally admired, enjoyed in early life, the advantages only of a very limited education, more limited even than those afforded in some districts by our common schools. But, behold what even that education, united to genius, talents and industry, does for him. You see a young man, who shortly before was without patrons, without the countenance of influential friends, and at first destitute even of the means of support, one of the most prominent members of the Kentucky bar, commanding the respect of the high and the low, with a lucrative practice and a rapidly growing fame. Subsequently you behold him a prominent member in the halls of congress, rising higher and higher, and continuing to serve his country, until death closes his career, and a nation's tears bedew his tomb.

Who that can read, and does read, and understand, has not been delighted and charmed with the productions of T. S. Arthur; yet he received in early life but a very common education. I might refer to others, but time does not permit. Many supported their parents and educated their brothers and sisters from the income of an education received in common schools. I mention these facts, not for the purpose of *undervaluing* colleges and other institutions in which the higher branches of learning are taught; no one can be a greater friend to them

than myself, but I mention them in order that our common schools *may not be undervalued*. Let all who possibly can do so, study in colleges, universities or other high schools, but let all such as have not these advantages, go into the common schools, and have faith enough to believe, that by industry and self-application, they may make attainments of great value and importance. Parents, especially, should bear in mind, that their children, with the advantages afforded by the public schools *properly improved*, may not only become intelligent men and women, but may occupy positions of great usefulness and great honor. From the plough and the workshop, with a good substantial education; yes, from the cabin of the backwoods, the sons of Americans may go to the halls of congress, or occupy the presidential chair. I am not one of those who believe that a man must be worth fifty or a hundred thousand dollars, and be able to spend a fifth or a tenth part of it, to get an office of honor, trust or profit. I believe there is virtue enough, honor and good sense enough among our voters to elect men to high offices, though their purses be small, if their hearts are large and their heads are wise. They know well, that a mind thoroughly furnished with useful knowledge, prepares better for office, than a purse well filled with gold. A man who bribes others to vote for him, will be bribed himself; a man who buys the votes of others, would sell his own vote, if occasion offered, and is, therefore, unfit to legislate in a land of freedom.

Men may presume on the want of intelligence among the people, they may bid “magnificently” for office by repealing compromises as dear to the patriot as so much of the Constitution itself, but let them look out, for their day of reckoning is at hand. There is a corrective influence amongst us, the origin and moving power of which is found in our enlightenment, and our enlightenment is the fruit of our education.

Lest my allusion here should be misunderstood, I would remark, that the Nebraska bill, so far as it merely asserted the rights of the states to make their own laws in regard to slavery, met my sincere approval, but that part which repealed the compromise, and opened the door to slavery in territory where it

had been solemnly and *forever* prohibited, meets my hearty reprobation, and I am not without hope that this obnoxious part of the bill will yet be repealed, and the compromise of 1820, be restored to its former legality and force. But I must return to my subject from which I have been sliding a little.

The system of common schools, like all other great enterprises, needs improvement. It needs more competent teachers than it has had or now has. We believe there is scarcely a greater want in our country at the present time, than that of a class of men, thoroughly educated, and willing to make teaching school a permanent business. In our country there are comparatively few who may be called professional teachers. The greatest number teach only part of their time, and then engage in other pursuits to secure a living. Some teach school in order to get money to go to some academy or college; others have come from college and engage in teaching for a while to secure funds to prosecute a professional education.

Amid all these disadvantages we must wonder, not that many of our teachers do not succeed as well as might be desirable, but that they succeed as well as they do. But it must be plain to every intelligent person, that if the work of education shall ever be properly and thoroughly performed, our teachers must make it a permanent employment; looking to it as their permanent business, by which they must live and secure a character.

The want of good teachers is met to some extent by normal schools, but these will not *entirely* meet the want. To get more good teachers, the worth of education must be more deeply felt and teachers must be better paid. If the day once arrives, and we sometimes think we see its dawn in the distance, when parents will feel as they ought to feel relative to the education of their children, (will feel that a good education is the greatest fortune they can possibly give them,) then shall we see liberality displayed in the compensation of teachers, and as a happy result of that liberality, see our schools supplied with competent teachers.

Unless teachers are well paid they cannot secure a living by

teaching, and must give the greater part of the year to other employments, and, therefore, cannot be expected to succeed as teachers in a very high degree. There are many teachers in this country, who teach only part of their time, who if they could give their whole time to the work, would doubtless be highly successful in performing it; all they want is *constant practice* to make them teachers of the first degree.

And here permit me to remark to teachers, if any are present, that they must live in hope of a brighter, better day. The ball is in motion and will roll on. The cause of education is certainly gaining favor with the people every year. Besides, teachers should look to higher considerations than dollars and cents. They should find their greatest reward for their work, not in high salaries, but in the expansion of the moral and intellectual qualities of their pupils. The question asked most frequently should not be, how can I with the least trouble make the most money; but, how can I, even with much trouble, improve the minds and hearts of these children entrusted to my care.

If a teacher is industrious and uses every effort to advance the children in their studies, parents will observe it, respect him for it, and appreciate his labors. There are few parents, so lost to correct feeling and proper judgment, as not to esteem the man who performs such a great work for them, as to improve the minds, hearts and manners of their children. If they love their children, they cannot help but respect him who spares no pains or labors to make them what their parents desire them to be, intelligent, virtuous and polite. It is often teachers own fault, that they are not more respected, or that the people are unwilling to pay them liberal wages. They make teaching a kind of secondary business, and do not attend to it, as punctually, faithfully and energetically as they should. Parents expend their money, lose the time of their children at school, observe little or no improvement, become discouraged, and feel little inclination to continue expenses, which promise such small profits. And I would ask, who can blame them? Those teachers who are competent to give thorough instruc-

tion, and do their duty faithfully, seldom fail to secure the esteem of parents, or even to secure reasonable wages. There may still be fault finders, no matter how well the teacher performs his duties, but they will be few in number, and weak in influence, compared with those who will appreciate his honest efforts, and who will respect and commend him.

As it regards improvement in the sciences, wonders may be accomplished by hard study and self-application, even without the aid of a living instructor. There are so many excellent works published from time to time, in which the different branches of learning are so clearly illustrated, that if a person has a fair beginning in them, much may be accomplished in a private way. A very ordinary scholar, progressing a little every day, before he himself expects it, finds himself high up the hill of science; whilst the careless student with diploma and college honors, but no application, finds himself, after a few years, stumbling among the rocks at the mountain's base, far from the flowers and golden fruit, that bloom and grow above.

Man has been created for active life. Even in the beautiful and fertile garden of Eden, where all delights abounded, where golden fruit that glowed like rosy-morn invited taste, labor and industry were required. In what these consisted we shall not presume to say; perhaps as Milton tells us, in winding the woodbine round his arbor; in separating the myrtle from the blooming rose; and teaching the clasping ivy where to climb; it is enough to know that the duty of keeping and dressing the garden of Eden was assigned to man in his purest and happiest state. That happy state has long since been lost—its joys and smiles have been exchanged for griefs and tears; but the sentence which succeeded, "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat thy bread" has never been revoked. This sentence is still in force, as well in regard to mental culture as in regard to the culture of the ground. Man must work mentally, if he would secure a harvest of scientific attainments, as well as he must work physically to secure a harvest of grain. Teachers should appreciate the great value of learning; if they do not, they are not the men to teach. If a teacher under-

stands and appreciates the value of learning, he will use every effort to fit himself for the work before him. Truly the guilt of that man or woman must be great, who takes charge of a school, without an earnest desire and solemn resolution, to do all he can for the improvement of the children placed under his care. I would not for a world be in the place of him or her, who disappoints all the fond hopes of parents, by being indolent, neglectful, incompetent, or otherwise the cause of discouraging the children and ruining their minds. The money which parents pay for nothing, and the time which their children lose at school for nothing, are the smallest injuries which they sustain from the incompetency or neglect of an indifferent teacher.

The most ruinous consequences of such a teacher's course, are upon the minds and habits of his pupils. They become careless, and lose their love for study, if they ever loved it, and if they did not, they never will, whilst under his control. In this respect, an unfaithful teacher may injure his scholars permanently as long as they live. I would, therefore, most earnestly entreat teachers to consider the magnitude and importance of their vocation, and proportion their efforts to meet its demands.

In this connection, I feel it my duty to remind parents that a good and faithful teacher is to them and their children of priceless value, and that they should so consider him. Parents who love their children, and wish to see them virtuous, intelligent and happy, should not regard a few dollars which they may have to pay additionally, and above what they were accustomed to pay, in order to secure his services. The services of a competent and faithful teacher are cheap at almost any price, whilst those of one incompetent and unfaithful, if gratuitously given, would be immensely dear. This may seem to some, who have not considered the subject thoroughly, or who have not tested the matter, or who are great lovers of money, a strange truth, but it is a truth, the force of which many parents and children have felt, when it was too late. Do not then discourage a good and faithful teacher, by refusing to give him liberal wages, or by hinting to him that you pay your money grudgingly, but make him

feel that you love and respect him, and that you pay him cheerfully for the valuable services which you receive at his hands. This will encourage him in his work, and induce him even to augment his efforts to repay your kindness. Whilst I feel, and, I trust, appreciate the importance and value of your system of common schools, I deem it my duty, briefly to express my views, in regard to the higher branches of learning, which, with few exceptions, are not yet taught in our common schools. If we can do no more, let us, *by all means*, secure for our children a common education, but if we can do more, let us, *by all means, do what we can*. It is very wrong to conclude, as some do, that the higher branches of learning, such as Geometry, Philosophy, Astronomy, Rhetoric, Logic, the Ancient Languages, and polite learning generally, are necessary and useful, for such only as intend to become professors, teachers, statesmen, lawyers, doctors, clergymen, poets, &c.

A thorough liberal education is important to all who can secure it; to every farmer and every mechanic. Travel in our own country, or in other countries, or travel in thought and by means of history, through all the ages of antiquity, and every where you will find a liberal education, attended with a refined manner of living, and with social virtues. Beneath the path of science, the amiable manners of Athens sprang up like the flowers beneath the feet of the fabled goddess of beauty. With the arts and sciences, refinement and manners were conveyed to Rome, and never did they appear among any people, without greatly improving them, polishing their manners and enlightening their views. The spirit of the arts and sciences, like a faithful friend and companion, follows its possessor into all the different scenes of life, the domestic circle and the affairs of state. It animated Cicero, the great Roman orator, when he accused or defended a citizen, it animated him also when he governed, when he rescued his country from destruction, when he settled the disputes of individuals, or decided the destiny of nations; it followed him whithersoever he went, as a guardian, a friend and guide. No wonder then that he says: "Hæc studia adolescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant—

secundas res ornant—adversis perfugium ac solatium præbent, delectant domi, none impediunt foris—pernoctant nobiscum, perigrinantur, rusticantur.” Which may be translated: “These studies nourish youth—delight age, gild prosperity, afford a refuge and comfort in adversity, delight us at home without hindering us abroad—they tarry with us all night, they travel with us—they dwell with us in the country.” There is certainly nothing in this world of a temporal nature of greater value and importance, than a thorough education, and it is a blessing for which we can never be sufficiently grateful, that in our happy country, even the poorest, if possessed of health, may have an opportunity to obtain it. A good taste, a quick and delicate perception of the beautiful, the grand and harmonious, which a liberal education aids us in acquiring and improving, enables us to derive pleasure and profit from many things which otherwise would be blanks to us.

A single leaf of a tree, which seems unworthy of attention; a single flower of the field which we tread indifferently beneath our feet, when scientifically viewed and analyzed, afford both pleasure and instruction to the mind.

Beautiful and glorious as our country is, it will become more so as the advantages of a thorough education will be better understood, and more fully appreciated.

The gold of California is of no use in the earth: to become valuable it must be discovered, dug and coined; so it is with genius. There is no want of it in our country; no want of it in our state; like her natural resources it is abundant, but like them it must be brought out and be properly developed. This work a thorough education will successfully accomplish, and hence it is our imperative duty to furnish to our youth a substantial and thorough education.

Perhaps, the question may be asked, if a good education is so valuable and desirable, and exerts such a favorable influence on the character and actions of men, why is it that among those who have a good education, we find many who are wicked and immoral? Are there not educated men, who are a curse rather than a blessing to the world; whose learning in the em-

phatic language of Dr. Payson, is "like a sword in the hands of a madman." We admit that there are such, but this does not prove that learning exerts an unfavorable influence on the heart; for example, we all believe that a country of liberty like ours, is favorable to virtue, yet we still have crime, yea much crime, even in America; but what reasonable man would attribute crime in our country, to its liberty or its republican government; or who would conclude that liberty and a republican government could not be favorable to virtue, simply because there are some who enjoy them, and yet are wicked. It only shows that such is the depraved nature of man, that the best things will often be abused and be perverted to criminal ends. We attribute to learning no magic power, which will make our children virtuous without other means; but we do believe that in connection with proper moral training, it becomes a powerful means to make them intelligent and useful citizens, a blessing alike to their parents, to their country and the world. A child that has been taught, a child that is intelligent, may certainly be persuaded from the path of danger more easily, than one that is ignorant, and does not understand nor feel the force of truth.

Some parents are afraid if they give their children a liberal education, they will become indolent and proud, too proud to work, and thus be of no farther service to them, nor be able to secure a living for themselves.

This we regard as a great mistake; and believe just the contrary to be the truth. In proportion as children are properly educated, thoroughly trained, *mentally and morally*, will they have proper feelings, and a due sense of what they owe to their parents, and endeavor to aid them in securing a respectable and comfortable living. The youth who enters upon the world without an education, is not only liable to be defrauded by every sharper with whom he comes in contact, but he is also more easily seduced from the path of virtue, and more easily persuaded to seek, in bad society, the intoxicating bowl, or some other low indulgence, the pleasures of his life.

He is thus led to forget his parents, and the sacred duties which he owes to them. Far different will it be with those

who spend their leisure hours in reading good books, and in studying the arts and sciences, which they early learned to love and to appreciate. This mental exercise which proves a great pleasure to them; keeps them from the society of the low and wicked, it affords a cheering light in the midst of surrounding darkness, and enables them to see the precipice and avoid it, into which thousands have fallen and have been undone forever.

We have viewed, however imperfectly it may have been, the great and responsible work before us, and now conclude with the earnest hope, that we will perform it, so as to secure for ourselves the approval of conscience, and of our common Father in heaven.



